

First of a Series on
STORIES BEHIND MUSEUM ZOOLOGY EXHIBITS

ANIMALS, HUNTERS, AND SCIENTISTS

by

NANCY WORSHAM

Raymond Foundation



Museum Stories, Number 288

October 1, 1955

Animals, Hunters, and Scientists

"How did you get this panda?" and "Who shot that tapir?" are questions asked so often by children visiting Chicago Natural History Museum that we began looking into some of the stories behind our zoology exhibits. So many of these stories are of general interest that we are telling some of them in this series. The stories are about the animals themselves, the people who collected them, and the ways the animals were prepared for exhibition.

Specimens of animals come to the Museum from many sources. Most of the specimens are never seen by the public. These collections are kept on the upper floors of the Museum where they are used by scientists and advanced students who are constantly adding to our knowledge of animals. Some animals are collected by special Museum expeditions. An expedition may be a large organized group of people that goes into the wild unexplored areas of the world to find things of scientific interest. Such an expedition may stay in the field for several months at a time. But sometimes an expedition is one man only a few miles from his own home collecting a particular species.

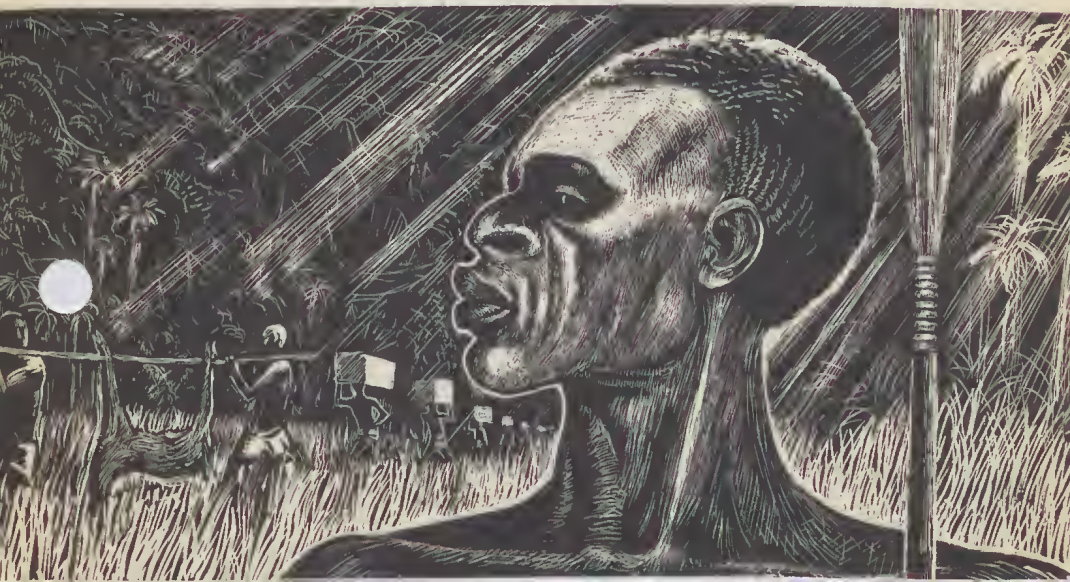
Many zoological specimens are given to the Museum by people who have collected them as a hobby. Big-game



hunters who have hunted African and Asian animals for sport often donate their prizes to the Museum for everyone to see. When this happens, the specimen is labeled with the name of the donor. Most donations are not so large and spectacular, but all gifts are equally appreciated. Many of the insects, shells, amphibians, reptiles, birds, and small mammals have been part of someone's private collection. Many people collect such things for recreation in order to be outdoors and enjoy nature. When a collection gets too large to keep at home or is no longer wanted, the entire collection may be given to the Museum.

Many of our more recently acquired animals lived in one of the local zoos until they died a natural death. These animals are seldom as battle scarred as wild ones because they have not had to fight for their lives and food. But even zoo animals do not always die of natural causes. For example, the hippopotamus in Hall 22 (Carl E. Akeley Memorial Hall, African Mammals) died in a Cincinnati zoo when a thoughtless child threw a rubber ball into the animal's open mouth. The ball lodged in the hippo's intestine and killed him.

We hope these stories will make the Museum exhibits more interesting to you. We hope also that seeing the exhibits will help you enjoy the stories more.



This page is for your own notes and illustrations

Second of a Series on
STORIES BEHIND MUSEUM ZOOLOGY EXHIBITS

CARL E. AKELEY, FATHER OF TAXIDERMY

by

NANCY WORSHAM

Raymond Foundation



Museum Stories, Number 289

October 8, 1955

Carl E. Akeley, Father of Taxidermy

The Virginia deer exhibited in Chicago Natural History Museum are a historic group. Carl E. Akeley prepared them in his private taxidermy shop in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. It took him four years to complete the work because he was experimenting with techniques. The deer are shown as they appear in summer, fall, winter, and spring. The outstanding fact about them is that they are the first major group of animals to be prepared by the taxidermy mounting process now considered standard for museum exhibits. The mounted specimens were purchased by the Museum and have been on exhibition since 1902. They are now displayed in Hall 16 (Richard T. Crane, Jr., Hall, American Mammals).

Taxidermy before the Akeley process was a job of stuffing and upholstering, with little regard for the original shape or appearance of the animal. Now an attempt is made to display a life-like animal in its natural surroundings.

Carl Akeley was reared on a farm in New York state. As a boy he became interested in birds and eventually in mounting them. From a borrowed book that had cost a dollar he learned how to mount birds and small mammals. He took a few art lessons so that he could paint simple backgrounds for his specimens, and by the time he was sixteen Akeley had business cards printed announcing to the world that he did "artistic taxidermy in all its branches."

Although Akeley worked in many of the country's leading museums and taxidermy shops, his activities were quite varied. As an explorer he made several extensive African safaris. As a naturalist he knew more of the habits of



African animals than most other men. He was one of the best known big-game hunters of his day. He collected many of the African animals exhibited in both Chicago Natural History Museum and the American Museum of Natural History in New York. He was an outstanding wildlife photographer at a time when motion pictures were still a novelty. He was a fine artist. He made the bronze statues of the lion hunt that are exhibited in Stanley Field Hall. His artistic ability helped him in mounting animals as well as in making attractive backgrounds. As a pioneer among conservationists he did much to awaken interest in establishing game preserves, particularly in sections of Africa that were being exploited by sportsmen. His first major invention was a cement gun that uses compressed air to spray a liquid concrete. The gun has many uses—in applying stucco to buildings and in reinforcing planetarium and mine ceilings, irrigation ditches, and dams. Another important invention was a swivel mounting for outdoor cameras to permit taking movies of wild animals. Akeley developed many other small improvements in camera and photography work. Many Akeley cameras and cement guns were used by our armed forces during the first World War, as were Akeley searchlight mountings and mirrors.

Akeley died on a collecting trip in Africa and was buried in what he had called "the most beautiful spot in the world"—a place in a gorilla sanctuary that he had helped to establish. Through his motion pictures, books, lectures, statues, and magnificent mounted animals Akeley did more than any other man to acquaint the American public with the wildlife and people of the Africa he loved.



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Third of a Series on
STORIES BEHIND MUSEUM ZOOLOGY EXHIBITS

SU LIN

by

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Raymond Foundation



Museum Stories, Number 290

October 15, 1955

Su Lin

Su Lin was the very first giant panda ever brought out of China alive. Since no one knew just what to do for a baby giant panda, he was given about the same kind of care as a human baby. He was fed milk from a baby bottle every four hours (later baby-food cereals, strained vegetables, and vitamins were added), he was kept in a playpen, he took rides in a baby buggy, he wore diapers, he was visited by a regular baby doctor when he had a tummy ache, and a registered nurse supervised his daily routine in Brookfield Zoo, near Chicago.

Mrs. William H. Harkness found the baby panda in the bamboo forest of the mountains in Szechwan Province, China, when he was about six weeks old. She named him Su Lin, Chinese for "little bit of something very cute." A Chinese lady, Su Lin Young, had helped Mrs. Harkness plan her expedition, and so the name both fitted the baby and honored Mrs. Young. Mrs. Harkness kept her prize for more than five months, but she knew that the panda would soon outgrow her New York City apartment. Wild animals usually do better in a zoo with facilities for their care than cramped in a private home. On February 8, 1937, she took Su Lin to Brookfield Zoo. He was only six months old and was still being fed six or eight times a day (whenever he seemed hungry). He lived at the zoo in a room next to the first-aid station and was never left alone.

Su Lin was not put on public display until nice weather in March. He lived at Brookfield Zoo until April, 1938. When he died, Su Lin's body was taken to Chicago Natural History Museum for scientific study. His mounted skin is now in Hall 15 (Mammals in Systematic Arrangement).

Most of our knowledge of pandas is based on studies of Su Lin and fourteen other pandas that have come to this country and Europe. By the time they are a year old, pandas are no longer playful but become sedate, quiet animals. A panda in its prime weighs about 250 pounds. Grown pandas are too large to cuddle and do not like to be petted. They are likely to bite or scratch anyone who tries.

Most animals like companionship of some sort, but pandas are solitary and uninterested in any other animals, even other pandas. Zoos have tried to keep bear cubs with them, but the pandas would not play with the cubs and only became annoyed when the cubs tried to be friendly. Brookfield Zoo had best results with feeding pandas three meals a day. These meals consisted mainly of fresh vegetables and some fresh fruits. Occasionally

canned salmon or canned dog-food was added for variety.

Pandas make several distinct sounds. They bark when frightened or angry and whinny like a pony when they are pleased. Baby pandas whimper or fret and cry quite like human babies. They also frequently "talk" in their sleep.

The panda has five toes on each foot, and it also has an extra "thumb" growing from the base of the first toe. This extra thumb makes it possible for wild pandas to handle the slender bamboo stalks that abound in their mountains. Until Su Lin came to Brookfield Zoo, people thought that pandas live entirely on bamboo, but this is certainly not true of zoo pandas and probably not true of wild ones either. Su Lin did not particularly care for the fresh bamboo flown in especially for him.

Pandas do not seem to have very good eyesight, although they may see better at night when they are more active than in the daylight. Mrs. Harkness did not think Su Lin could see or hear anything the first few weeks she had him. But wild pandas do not have any enemies and do not prey on other animals, and so keen senses are not necessary.

Su Lin was one of the world's most famous individuals. He had countless visitors in the zoo. Some people made special trips from distant places such as Australia, New Zealand, and even China to see him.



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Fourth of a Series on
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SOUTH AMERICAN OSTRICHES

by

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Raymond Foundation



Museum Stories, Number 291

October 22, 1955

South American Ostriches

It was September and early spring in the grassland of Brazil. Emmet R. Blake, an ornithologist from Chicago Natural History Museum, was there to collect rheas, large flightless birds that weigh up to sixty or sixty-five pounds. Rheas are similar in habits and appearance to the African ostrich. Man is the rhea's main enemy because the strong-tasting eggs are eaten by Indians and the large, rounded, soft feathers have been used for feather dusters. As Blake and his Guarani Indian hunters rode horseback across the campo they saw many rhea flocks, each with one male, several females, and a few young from the previous summer. The nesting season does not begin until October, and so Blake spent the first few weeks taking pictures and collecting samples of plants, termite nests, and soil for the rhea exhibit.

When nesting began, all the females of each flock laid their eggs in one large nest to be incubated by the male. Nests may contain as many as sixty eggs, but around twenty is more usual, and each egg is about equal in bulk to a dozen hen's eggs. When the father sits on the nest with his wings outspread and his neck along the ground, it is almost impossible to see him.

The mother birds stay in the general area during the nesting period, feeding on leaves and berries and occasionally lizards and insects. But they stay completely away from the actual nest site. The chicks hatch in four to six weeks and with their father soon join the flock.

Blake first tried to capture the birds from horseback. When a bird was frightened from the nest, it would dash away with its wings spread like sails, trying to lead the men away from the eggs. These birds, which sometimes go over forty miles an hour, can outrun horses. The Brazilian ranch horses were not used to gunfire (the natives use bolas), and so every time Blake would shoot at a fleeing bird his horse would throw him. Blake then tried using an open truck. He stood in the back of the truck and tried to shoot over the cab while the driver followed the zigzag



trail of the birds. They seemed always to pick the roughest path—one full of armadillo holes and termite hills, which made the truck lurch and jolt crazily. Shooting was too difficult! The best method was to have a native cowboy ride the radiator of the truck and lasso the birds, which were then killed.

The rhea exhibit in Hall 20 (Bird Habitats) of Chicago Natural History Museum displays a father rhea and a nest of hatching eggs. In the foreground are about fifty thousand blades of artificial grass, two termite nests, and three other birds—a burrowing owl similar to the ones living on our own plains, a saucy-tailed little flycatcher, and a quail-like bird called a tinamou. There are two more birds in the painted background, a caracara and a carima, whose closest relative, the fossil *Mesembriornis*, became extinct several million years ago. The entire exhibit gives one a feeling of vast open spaces.

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Fifth of a Series on
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THE MAN-EATERS OF TSAVO

by

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Raymond Foundation



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The Man-eaters of Tsavo

Lions do not usually hunt men. Their normal diet is zebras, antelopes, ostriches, and other wild game of the grassland. However, occasionally an individual lion may become a man-eater. Man-eaters may be old lions that are no longer able to catch more agile game, or they may be lions that are just too lazy to hunt wandering herds. It seems that once a lion acquires a taste for human flesh he becomes a persistent man-eater. When this happens, the outlaw lion must be hunted and destroyed.

While the British government was building the Uganda Railway in East Africa in 1898, two man-eating lions began attacking the work camps in the Tsavo area. All usual lion-hunting methods failed. The work camps were scattered along about eight miles of right-of-way and the lions raided a different camp each time. When traps were laid, the lions skirted them. When bait was staked out, the lions chose another site for their raids. Each camp was surrounded by a thick *boma* (thorn fence), but the lions were able somehow to break through or jump over the *bomas* whenever they wished. Every few nights another man was dragged from his bed by the lions.

The workmen soon became so frightened that they went on strike, saying they had come "to work for the government, not to supply food for either lions or devils." Some of the more superstitious men really believed that the lions were devils. The few brave men who remained took elaborate precautions to keep out of the lions' grasp. They built platforms in trees, on roofs, on girders—any place that the lions could not reach. One man even built a three-story apartment on top of the water tank and rented bed space to his friends.

At last it was decided that if the lions were interested only in eating men, a trap would have to be baited with men. A large two-room trap was built. Two men with guns were stationed in one of the rooms and the other room had a trap door that would swing shut when the lion entered. The men then were to shoot the beast. The plan would

have worked, too, but when the lion entered the trap and the door shut, the men became badly frightened and fired wildly in all directions. They missed the lion completely, but they did manage to hit the cage bars and made an opening that allowed the lion to escape.

The entire lion-hunting project was under the direction of Colonel J. H. Patterson, engineer in charge of the work crew. During the strike, hunting the lions was the full-time occupation of the men who stayed. Colonel Patterson eventually killed both lions by lying in ambush and waiting for them to return to unfinished meals. Before the nine-month "reign of terror" ended with the death of the lions, they killed and ate 135 workers and injured many more.

In 1924 following a public lecture in Chicago Natural History Museum, Colonel Patterson mentioned that he still had the Tsavo lion skins. President Stanley Field of the Museum bought the skins and gave them to the Museum, where they were mounted and have been exhibited ever since in Hall 22 (Carl E. Akeley Memorial Hall, African Mammals).



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Sixth of a Series on
STORIES BEHIND MUSEUM ZOOLOGY EXHIBITS

MOSQUITO

by

NANCY WORSHAM

Raymond Foundation



Museum Stories, Number 293
November 5, 1955

Mosquito

Very few artists have ever had to give their own blood to keep their living models healthy, but this is just what James E. Trott did. He is the artist and preparator who made the reproduction of the malaria mosquito that is on exhibition at Chicago Natural History Museum in the Insect Section of Hall 18 (Albert W. Harris Hall). Trott had to study many live mosquitoes under his microscope before he was able to make the large-scale model. He kept them in screened cages on one of the upper floors of the Museum. A small rodent was kept in the cage to supply food for them, but the mosquitoes did not seem to do well. So Trott would roll up his sleeve and put his arm in the cage to give the mosquitoes a good meal.

The finished model is twenty-five times the natural size of a common malaria mosquito. If it were alive and would eat proportionally as much as a real mosquito, it would suck up about five teaspoons of blood for one meal instead of a tiny drop. The model is more than two feet long and the body alone measures ten inches. The body is carved from a plastic called plexiglass. The surface details, such as wing scales, are made from separate pieces of plastic and mammal hair. More than twenty thousand pieces were individually cut, shaped, and fitted into place to make the enlarged model an exact copy of the actual malaria mosquitoes. On the models of the larva and pupa that accompany it some of the carving and painting had to be done from the inside so that the inner parts could be seen through the transparent body. It took nearly a year for the artist to learn the plastic modeling techniques. It took another year for him to observe the live mosquitoes and to make the model and still another year to finish the exhibit so that it would tell the complete story of the mosquito and malaria, the disease it carries.

Only the female mosquito feeds on blood. The male eats plant juices instead. So it is only the female malaria mosquito that carries the disease. If she feeds on the blood of someone who has the disease, then the blood



parasite develops in the mosquito's body, and when the mosquito bites a healthy person the disease is passed to him. The main symptoms of malaria in people are periodic chills and fever that usually begin about ten days after the original infection has occurred.

The female mosquito lays her eggs in water and these eggs hatch into swimming larvae called wrigglers. The wrigglers live in the water but, because they need air, each wriggler has a breathing tube that sticks up from its abdomen like a snorkel tube when the wriggler floats just below the surface.

Although some mosquitoes in various parts of the world can carry yellow fever, elephantitis, dengue, and malaria, most of them are much more of a nuisance than a danger. The itch of a mosquito bite is the result of the irritating saliva injected by the mosquito into your skin to temporarily keep the blood from clotting.

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Seventh of a Series on
STORIES BEHIND MUSEUM ZOOLOGY EXHIBITS

CROCODILE HUNTING

by

NANCY WORSHAM

Raymond Foundation



Museum Stories, Number 294

November 12, 1955

Crocodile Hunting

The shores of Lake Ticamaya were lined with a host of gape-mouthed crocodiles basking in the tropic sun—a perfect place to collect crocodiles for a Chicago Natural History Museum exhibit. Karl P. Schmidt and his assistant, Leon L. Walters, watched the crocs, which were resting with their mouths open—not to grab some unsuspecting prey (as people often think) but to dry and kill the many leeches living in their mouths.

American crocodiles live in Cuba, Central America, and the southern tip of Florida but are particularly abundant in Lake Ticamaya, a shallow muddy lake about a mile wide filled with islets and patches of cattail. This lake is in northern Honduras, a Central American country, and crocodiles gather on its rocks, beaches, and islets in such large numbers that seventy-five were in sight at one time.

Schmidt and Walters had some real adventures before they collected enough animals for the exhibit. They soon learned that even a small crocodile can be dangerous if it



is only wounded and can hide in the muddy water. After both men had narrow escapes from such angered crocodiles they gave up hunting them without harpoons. Crocodile hunting is usually done at night by shining a bright light in

the animal's eyes and shooting at the eyes. But Lake Ticamaya crocodiles are so numerous that they are hunted in the daytime. As crocodiles walk on the bottom of shallow lakes, like Ticamaya, searching for food, they stir up bubbles of marsh gas from the bottom ooze. The native Carib hunters know a crocodile's size and speed from the position and spacing of the bubbles.

When a crocodile realizes that it is being followed by a dugout, it stops walking on the bottom and swims by powerful sidewise strokes of its tail. Its legs and webbed feet, folded against its body, leave no bubble trail. The croc will dash wildly in circles, figure eights, and straight lines either at the surface or in the murky water. It will lie motionless on the bottom for minutes at a time or until prodded and then start its wild thrashing again. Both the harpooner and the boatman need skill and attention to keep on the trail.

A small crocodile can easily be towed ashore by the dugout once the harpoon is lodged securely. But if the crocodile is more than ten feet long, it will tow the hunters all around the lake instead. Then one man must get into the chest-deep water and, with the hundred-foot harpoon line, tow the animal to shore. There it can be quickly killed with least damage to its skin and skull.

The largest crocodile caught by Schmidt and Walters was eleven feet two inches long and weighed more than half a ton. A crocodile of this size would eat peccaries, deer, turtles, fish, birds, and many smaller crocodiles (a crocodile's worst enemy besides man is probably larger crocodiles). Crocodiles snap their powerful jaws at anything that comes in range—food, men, the harpoon rope. The largest croc even snapped at the bullet that killed it and snapped with such force that the sound was like another gunshot. Ordinarily, once they grasp their prey in their vise-like jaws, crocodiles spin around rapidly in the water until the prey drowns or is torn apart.

Four of the crocodiles captured in Lake Ticamaya are now exhibited in the Reptile Section of Hall 18 (Albert W. Harris Hall) in Chicago Natural History Museum.

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Eighth of a Series on
STORIES BEHIND MUSEUM ZOOLOGY EXHIBITS

AMERICAN TAPIRS

by

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Museum Stories, Number 295

November 19, 1955

American Tapirs

Prudencio sat on his ox with his rifle in his hands. His keen eyes shifted from side to side taking in everything—the distant horizon, the shady depth of the jungle, the grass on the pampa. Prudencio, a full-blooded Bororo Indian, had grown up knowing the ways of the wild animals of the Brazilian cattle ranch where he lived as well as a city boy knows bells and traffic lights. Most of the Indians on the ranch worked as cowboys, but Prudencio was the official hunter. It was his job to keep jaguars and pumas from killing too many cattle. But now he was on a special job helping the North American naturalists of the Captain Marshall Field Brazilian Expedition collect animals for Chicago Natural History Museum.

As he rode along he saw a sleeping tapir almost hidden by the jungle growth. He knew that the Museum needed enough of these animals to make a habitat group, but Prudencio would not shoot a tapir. Tapirs are sacred to Bororos. Instead, he headed his ox back to camp to report the tapir's whereabouts. After a tapir was shot he did not mind helping to skin it, but he would not kill one.

Its short neck, legs, and tail and its general shape give the tapir a pig-like appearance, though it is more closely related to the horse and the rhinoceros. Its long snout and upper lip form a trunk (similar to the elephant's but not so long) used for getting food into its mouth. Tapirs have four toes on the front feet and three on the hind ones. Each toe ends in a small hoof. Baby tapirs are dark brown with white stripes and spots that suggest the pattern of deer fawns. The babies gradually replace their spotted coats with adult coats of medium gray-brown.

Prudencio was good at tracking tapirs and knew where, when, and how to find them. He knew that they bed down in jungle undergrowth in early morning, and so it is not easy to find them after dawn. But just after midday they rouse and go to water. After drinking their fill, they return to rest until dark. They feed during the night upon tree leaves and fruits. Prudencio knew the swamps where they

get their noontime drink. He also knew where to hunt them at night, but that is when the jaguar hunts them too. The jaguar is the main enemy of the tapir.

On another afternoon hunt Prudencio and Marcelino, his son, startled a mother tapir and her half-grown babe in a clearing. The mother bounded into the undergrowth, but Prudencio lassoed the young one. He called Marcelino to help him tie the animal. The boy took off his belt, threw it to his father, and then, as frightened as the mother tapir, he too turned and fled. If his father was going to anger the Bororo gods, Marcelino was not going to stay!

With the belt and leather lasso Prudencio fashioned a sort of harness for the tapir. But it was a difficult animal to manage. No amount of coaxing, prodding, pulling, push-



ing, or straining could budge it. The tapir was just as stubborn as its distant cousin, the donkey. Prudencio tied the tapir to a tree and returned to camp for the naturalists, who got their specimen for the Museum.

The tapirs that Prudencio found are now displayed in Hall 16 (Richard T. Crane, Jr., Hall, American Mammals) of Chicago Natural History Museum.

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Ninth of a Series on
STORIES BEHIND MUSEUM ZOOLOGY EXHIBITS

BUSHMAN

by

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Raymond Foundation



Museum Stories, Number 296

November 26, 1955

Bushman



A high-wheeled Ford made the trip to the village 150 miles from the American Presbyterian Mission at Yaonde in the Cameroons of West Africa and back over the jungle trail that served as the only road. Dr. W. C. Johnstone, head of the mission, had bought a baby gorilla from the natives of the distant village. This infant, only a few weeks old, weighed slightly more than eight pounds and was so weak and helpless that he could not even turn himself over. A native man named Belinge was hired to care for the baby. Each day Belinge stood in line with the native women who were getting milk from the mission for their own babies, so that his tiny charge could have fresh milk too. This is the first we know of the life of Bushman, the gorilla who later became so famous.

As Bushman grew, his diet included fresh jungle fruits and berries. Belinge cared for the gorilla for two years, but Dr. Johnstone knew that his pet would soon outgrow the mission's facilities. Bushman was sent to an animal dealer who sold him to Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago in August, 1930.

By the time he was little more than two years old, Bushman, a gorilla from the lowland jungles of west-central Africa, had crossed a large section of two continents and

an ocean. In his new home he soon became a center of attention and admiration, a position he held until his death twenty-one years later. Bushman seemed to enjoy people as much as they enjoyed him. He was happiest when he had the largest crowds in front of his apartment at the zoo. Most zoo animals must share their cages with others, but not Bushman. He had a two-room suite of his own. For several years he was taken out daily to romp and play with his keeper, but this was stopped as Bushman became larger and stronger. He demonstrated his friendship for his favorite people by offering them bits of food.

Bushman, like all gorillas, could stand on his hind legs to look around, but when he wanted to move about he walked on his hind feet and front knuckles. Although gorillas live in forested areas, most of their time is spent on the ground. Females and youngsters seem to do a little more climbing than mature males.

In the zoo Bushman's daily diet included whole-wheat raisin bread, twenty-two pounds of fresh fruit, and three quarts of milk. In the wild he would have eaten even more fruit, berries, and juicy leaves. Wild gorillas live in family groups—one large male, two or three females, and four or five young. If food becomes scarce, gorilla bands may raid local plantations. These occasional raids plus the great strength gorillas can display when provoked have led to many false beliefs about the fierceness of gorillas. Actually, a gorilla (meaning "old man of the forest"), if left alone, is a quiet, peace-loving family animal that will avoid fighting or contact with man whenever it can.

When full grown, Bushman was about six feet two inches tall and weighed around 550 pounds. Some gorillas have weighed as much as 600 pounds and some have lived longer, but none has been as popular as Bushman. During his final illness newspapers carried daily bulletins on his condition, and when he died on New Year's Day, 1951, the zoo received sympathy cards from all over the world.

People can still see this famous animal on exhibition in Chicago Natural History Museum in Hall 22 (Carl E. Akeley Memorial Hall, African Mammals).

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